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AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST

VOLUME 57 NUMBER 4 AUGUST 1955

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*Two Processes of Change in Mandan-Hidatsa Kinship Terminology**

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INTRODUCTION

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WE ALREADY have some understanding of the progressive stages in the breakdown of a Crow type kinship system under conditions of social change (Spoehr 1947; Eggan 1950), but we lack sufficient information on the actual processes and interactions involved in the shift from one basic kinship type to another. This paper deals with processes of kinship change in one village of Mandan-Hidatsa Indians living on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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The Mandan and Hidatsa are both small Siouan-speaking tribes with a long history of residence in the Missouri River Valley. Although the Mandan and Hidatsa had different origins, spoke mutually unintelligible languages, and lived in separate villages, they have been in intimate and peaceful association for over two hundred years, with constant cultural borrowings and intermarriage. For the problem to be dealt with here, we may consider the two tribes as one.

Both groups were part of the Prairie earth lodge complex, which included the Chiwere and Dhegihà Sioux and the Caddoan tribes and covered the area encompassed by the Arkansas and Missouri River valleys. A dual subsistence economy of agriculture and hunting was adjusted to an abundant ecological setting in the fertile creek and river bottom lands. Each tribe was composed of a number of independent villages integrated by social and ceremonial ties. The characteristic dwelling was the earth lodge, occupied by matrilocal extended families. The social structure of the Mandan-Hidatsa included a clan and moiety system, matrilineal lineages, an elaborate set of societies, and a Crow type kinship system.

In the early nineteenth century, the two tribes were severely reduced in population by a series of smallpox epidemics. By 1862, the remnants of the Mandan-Hidatsa had consolidated with the Arikara in one village for mutual defense against hostile nomads. With the Indian Bureau allotment program in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the people of the village were scattered into a number of separate and smaller communities on the Fort Berthold Reservation. A group of Mandan and Hidatsa families established

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* An abbreviated version of this paper was read at the 52nd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association held at Tucson, Arizona, Dec. 28–30, 1953. I am indebted to the Social Science Research Council and the Department of Anthropology of the University of Chicago for financial support of field work. Fred Eggan and others have kindly read this paper and have made suggestions for its improvement.

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themselves in one of these communities located on an isolated segment of the reservation between the Missouri and the Little Missouri rivers. The village is called Lone Hill by the Indian people. In 1951, Lone Hill had a total Indian population of 267 individuals forming 48 nuclear families.

THE PROBLEM

In the summer of 1951 and continuing in 1952–53, I studied social and cultural change in Lone Hill village. Starting with an investigation of kinship using the genealogical method I obtained kinship schedules essentially similar to those reported by Morgan (1871:291–382), Lowie (1917), and Bowers (1950, ms.) as characterizing the traditional Crow lineage system. It became apparent that for some members of Lone Hill, both old and young, the terminological system had not changed. While the majority of the schedules gathered in the village represented the Crow lineage system, this was not so for every case. A number of schedules were obtained with English terms and were directly comparable to the American type of system. Thus, within one community, I obtained two kinds of kinship patterns, the first aboriginal Indian and the second modern near-white.

This extreme variation is not too surprising if one considers previous work on kinship change in other American Indian tribes which have had a comparable Crow lineage system. Spoehr (1947), comparing related tribes within the Southeastern area, found direct evidence of a complete series from a pure Crow type to a variant of an American generational system with intermediate forms showing a regular pattern of change. The Schmitts (n.d.), within one community of Wichita, found variations in kinship terminology which fitted into the latter part of Spoehr's more complete series. The direction of the Wichita data tends to validate Spoehr's conclusions—when a Crow system changes under modern acculturative influence, there is an increasing patrilineal emphasis, a shift from a lineal to a generational pattern in classification, and a diminishing importance of kinship in regulating social life.

The point to be stressed here is that the terminological systems gathered among the Indian people of Lone Hill village were either pure Crow or white generation types—both extremes without the intermediate variations. While a generational type kinship system is found among the Mandan-Hidatsa and in the cases reported upon by Spoehr and the Schmitts, the absence of intermediate variations in Lone Hill suggests a significant difference in the kind of acculturation taking place. This difference may be clarified by a description of the types of terminological systems found in Lone Hill, followed by an analysis of the mechanisms of kinship change.

THE KINSHIP PATTERNS

Of the two terminological kinship patterns found in Lone Hill, the pure Crow type remains the operating functional system for the majority of the people of the village. Figure 1 is a diagram of the system in the Hidatsa language with English equivalents. The orthography follows Bowers (ms.).

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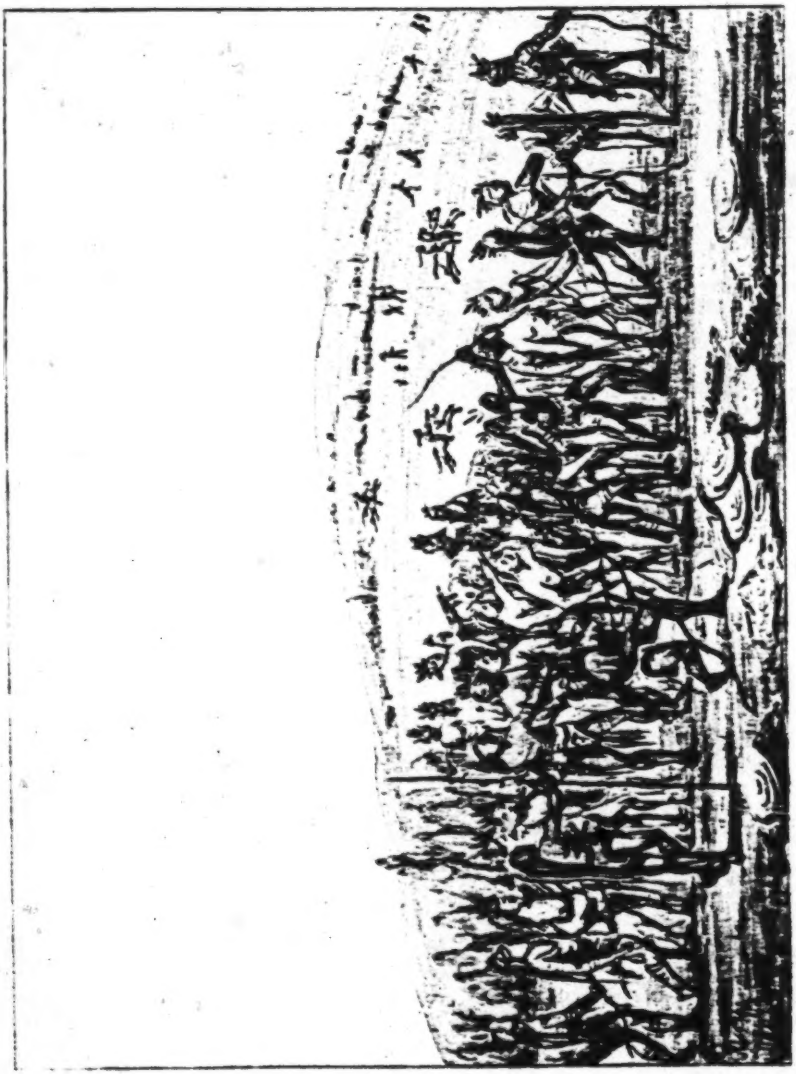

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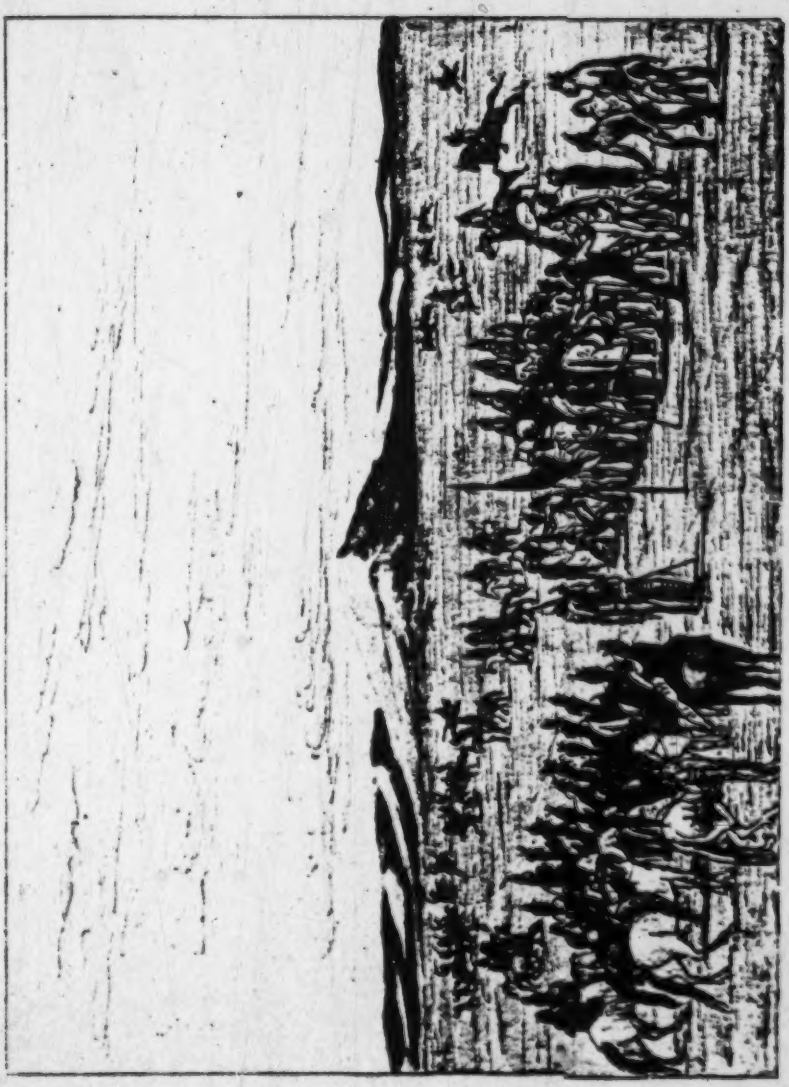

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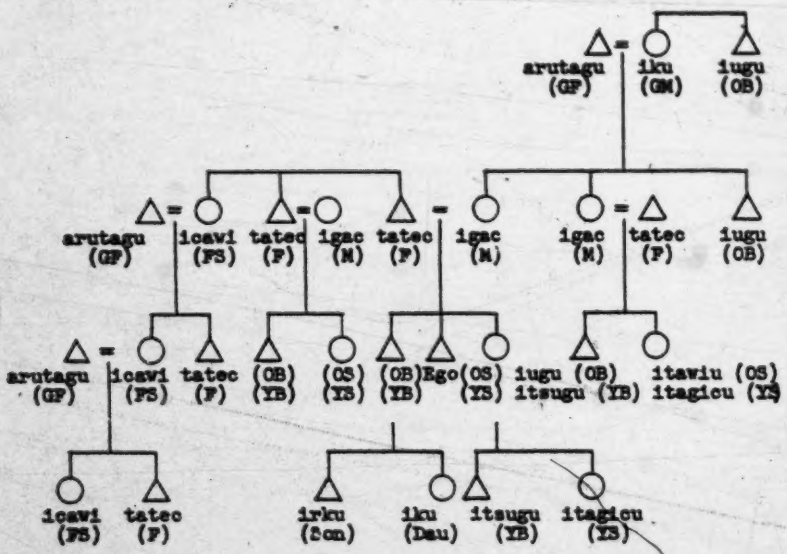
Although Lone Hill is composed of members of the Hidatsa and the Mandan tribes, the Hidatsa language has become standard in the village while the Mandan language is rapidly becoming extinct. This may have been due to the small percentage of Mandan-speaking people in Lone Hill when the community was formed. The Crow terminology is used in the Indian language in daily face-to-face contact among most of the people in the village. The meanings and applications of the terms have not changed. Bowers (1950:1) notes that "the kinship system has been affected little by recent events." Figure 1 is based upon observations of usage throughout the village and was



(Note—For a female ego, sister's children are son and daughter.)

FIG. 1

checked by formal schedules obtained from 14 individuals: 8 males ages 34 to 70, and 6 females ages 23 to 60.

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In certain situations the people of Lone Hill make a direct linguistic translation of the Crow terminology from the Indian language into the English language. Classificatory fathers are called uncle, classificatory mothers and fathers' sisters are called aunt, while niece, nephew, and cousin terms are applied indiscriminately and usually incorrectly from the white point of view. There are no uncle, cousin, niece, or nephew terms in the Indian language. Figure 2 is offered as an illustration—note particularly the descendants from the father's sister. As the diagram shows, the generation principle does not apply.

This use of English is not a variation of the Crow system but is rather the same system with an alternate language. The English kinship terms do not

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form a reciprocal system and do not conform to expected white usage, for example, an individual whom you address as uncle may call you cousin or brother rather than nephew. It is an egocentric system and is used only when an individual in Lone Hill finds himself in a situation in which he is forced to speak English. All but two of the 137 adults of the village are bilingual, as they speak English in addition to the Indian language. English is most often learned in government schools as a second language and is used by the Indian people to deal with the outside world: in contact with Indian Bureau employees, local white merchants, or when members of alien tribes visit or marry into the village.

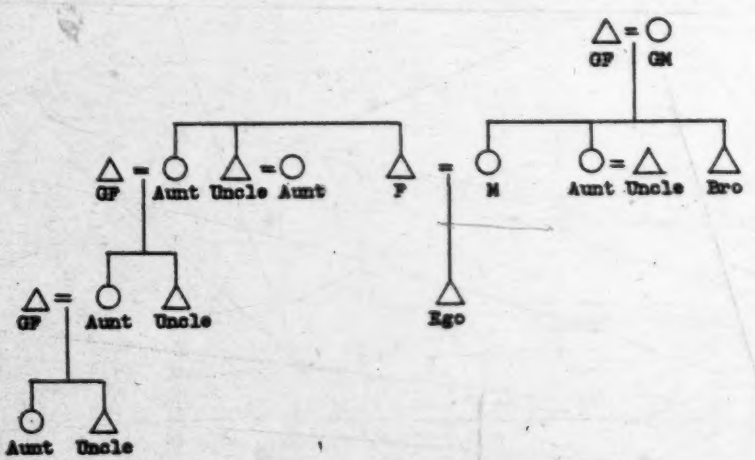

FIG. 2

The second major kinship pattern in Lone Hill consists of cases in which English terms are used in the white generation pattern, as indicated in Figure 3. My observations indicate that the generational system was used only by seven acculturated families. Many of the individuals in these families have spent most of their lives away from the village in off-reservation schools. The system was checked in formal interviews with six people, all between the ages of 20 and 30. In one instance a father's brother was called a cousin rather than an uncle because, as my informant said, "He is too young to be my uncle." The situations in which the generational system is employed tend to be relatively restricted and occur when acculturated individuals relate to one another, their close relatives, and whites in or outside the village.

An additional kinship complication arises in those homes in which a member of an alien tribe—usually Crow, Sioux, Blackfoot, or Arikara—marries a Mandan-Hidatsa resident of the village. No schedule can be given here as there is no general pattern, but one case will be briefly described as an illustration.

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As shown in Figure 4, John Bear Leg is the child of a mixed Hidatsa-Arikara marriage. The family lives in Lone Hill and speaks only English at home as Mrs. Bear Leg, an Arikara woman, does not understand Hidatsa. While discussing kinship, John referred to his father's sister's daughter, Mary White Duck, by the term "sister" and told me, "That's the white way." This is incorrect, of course, as in the American way Mary would be a cousin to John, while in the Hidatsa way, she would be an *icawi* or father's sister. I became excited here, as I thought I had found a case of ironing out generation differences which would represent an internal shift in kinship type. Further inquiry revealed that John's Arikara mother had told him to regard Mary as a sister. Mrs. Bear Leg wants her son to take all of his relationships

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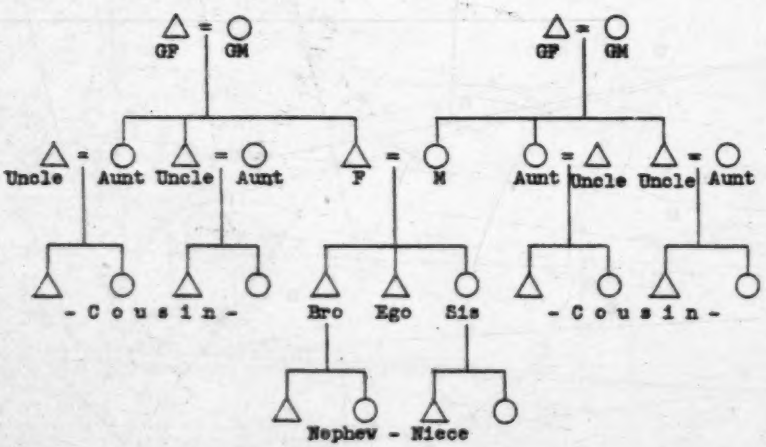

FIG. 3

in the Arikara way, and she attempts to teach him Arikara kinship. I checked with Mary, who informed me, "I know it's not right, but he calls me sister so I call him brother." The use of sibling terms for cross-cousins is one stage in Spoehr's series in the breakdown of a pure Crow system. But in this case it is a borrowed change introduced by an Arikara and not one that arose from the situation in Lone Hill.

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John's total kinship pattern indicates that he follows Hidatsa usage with most of his father's relatives and Arikara usage with all of his mother's relatives, who reside in another village at Fort Berthold. As his mother seems to be the dominant member of the family in these matters, John also refers to some of his father's relatives according to the Arikara way. I pointed out this apparent confusion to John, who replied, "I still don't know about these relationships yet, except what they say to me. The old folks each tell me their way. I'm catching on slow but sure." The net result of this situation is that while John knows how to interact with each specific relative he does not have a consistent total kinship system. John, now 24 years old, understands neither

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the Hidatsa, Arikara, nor the white kinship pattern. His case illustrates the confusion found among the children of mixed marriages in which the parents have not established a clear-cut identification with any one social system.

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To summarize thus far, the two kinship patterns found in Lone Hill are: (1) the traditional Crow terminological system, which remains the basic type for the village and has not changed, at least since 1862 when Morgan first gathered Mandan and Hidatsa kinship terms; and (2) a white generational system employed primarily by the acculturated families. There is also a separate set of English terms used in the Crow pattern for the benefit of outsiders and an inconsistent terminological pattern in some Indian homes in which a member of an alien tribe has come to Lone Hill through marriage.

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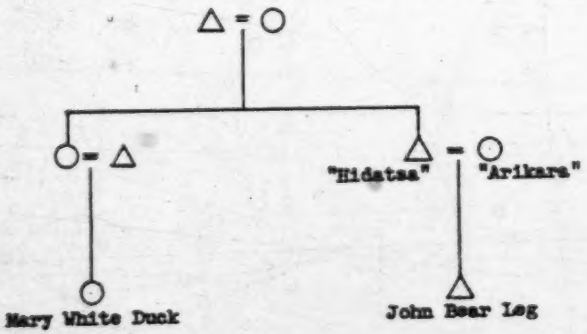

FIG. 4

TWO PROCESSES

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These data, considered in conjunction with the findings of Spoehr and of the Schmitts, indicate that there are two distinct processes involved in kinship change. The first process consists of the slow modification of a kinship system as evidenced by an orderly and progressive shift in type. This process is best illustrated by Spoehr's complete series in the transition from a pure Crow to an American generation type. Although the shift described by Spoehr was an indirect result of acculturative factors, the slow modification of a social structure may be due to internal forces that are not necessarily associated with culture contact (Eggan 1941; Gough 1952). The second process is a more radical change evidenced by an abrupt jump from one type of kinship system to another. In the second case, reported upon in this paper, the Indian and the white systems exist simultaneously without intermediate variations in kinship patterns.

Both processes of change, slow modification and sudden transformation, occur together in Lone Hill—and they also take place together among the Southeastern tribes. Spoehr emphasized the progressive stages in the breakdown of a Crow lineage system but he also recognized the more rapid type of kinship change (1947:198). The Mandan-Hidatsa seem to differ from the Southeastern tribes in terms of the relative importance of each process.

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The first process of slow modification has not affected the Crow kinship terminology and associated behavior in Lone Hill, but it has changed other aspects of social life in the village. There are many changes in content. A man recently modified the strict mother-in-law respect relation, not by the aboriginal practice of giving his mother-in-law a scalp, but by presenting her with an imitation war bonnet purchased from a mail order house. Innumerable other examples could be cited in which known changes in cultural content have not precipitated changes in the established social structure (cf. Gough 1952:85). An extreme illustration of this is provided by the previously mentioned case of English kinship terminology being used in the Crow kinship pattern. There are, however, many structural changes: the destruction of the native ceremonial life has decreased the religious importance of the father's lineage, the moieties are almost inoperative, the clans have diminished in importance, there is a general laxity among the youth in meeting certain kinship obligations, village organization has shifted from a close-knit unit to one of widely separated households, the matrilocal extended family is no longer a residence unit, and the lineage has ceased to be a corporate group. The only change in the Crow terminology is that vocative terms are rarely used except on public and community-wide occasions. The important point is that the gradual modification of the social structure has not proceeded far enough in Lone Hill to cause an internal shift in kinship type.

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The significance of the second process of radical change in Lone Hill may be seen in broader perspective by examining the kind of acculturation now taking place among the Mandan-Hidatsa (Bruner 1953). In every acculturated family that uses the American generational system there has been an Indian-white intermarriage within three ascending generations. Individuals in these families make an abrupt and almost total conversion to white ways, while the rest of the people in the village continue to live by more traditional Indian standards. In the families in which there has been a mixed marriage, the entire white system comes across in the socialization process. Among the Southeastern tribes the shifts in kinship terminology were the result of adaptive responses to changing conditions (Spoehr 1947:225). The presence of the white generational system in Lone Hill is due to neither cultural "borrowing," adult learning, nor rearrangements in the social structure precipitated by new conditions. Individuals in Lone Hill learn the American kinship system in the English language within the intimate domestic family situation. Although no single factor is ever sufficient to explain a highly complex acculturation situation, it would seem that these differences in the mechanisms of change may account for the differences in kinship patterns found among the Southeastern tribes and the Mandan-Hidatsa. (In a future paper, I shall document and describe the process of individual conversion to white ways in greater detail.)

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The converted Indian embraces a new way of life and comes to internalize a set of goals and values which are incongruent with the Crow lineage system. The kinship ties and obligations of the Crow system incorporate and reaffirm

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the older societal values. Kinship provides the means for mutual aid and co-operation in the village as well as a mechanism of social control for ridiculing and cajoling the nonconformist. While the Mandan-Hidatsa social system, with its wide range, embodies the primary societal values of sharing, generosity, group co-operation, and village unity, the converted Indian shifts to the more individualistic American values of accumulating goods and wealth as ends in themselves. Any member of Lone Hill who interacts with others in terms of the Crow kinship system and who meets the obligations of that system will remain an "Indian."

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The majority of the Indians who have converted to white ways tend to leave the village to seek their fortunes elsewhere (cf. Spicer 1940; Tax 1941). For this reason, there were few cases of American type kinship systems found in Lone Hill—most such people had already left their village. If all the individuals who adopted a new kinship system as part of a more inclusive conversion experience were to remain in Lone Hill, they might well produce radical changes in the existing social structure of the community. Their departure is a major factor making for the retention of traditional Indian ways. However, some of the converted Indians do continue to live in Lone Hill and do become sources of change in the Crow kinship system.

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Individuals in Lone Hill who do not fulfil their kinship obligations destroy the solidarity of the group and the unity of the system. The converted Indian will avoid any kinship tie which involves his sharing material wealth or giving of his time or possessions. One man has developed devious means to accomplish this. He deposits all of his money in a bank so that when people ask him for a loan he can honestly reply that he does not have any money around. He avoids any situation in which he might be called upon to make donations, and, as such, he never attends the social "give-away" dances. This man has consciously narrowed the range of his relationships but he has done so selectively. He will not address another by a kinship term if there is any possibility that he may have to help that person. On the other hand, he does not avoid his joking relatives, for through the structured joking he can make critical remarks about Indian ways which would not be permitted in any other context.

SITUATIONAL DETERMINANTS

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As converted Indians who use the generational system do interact with their many relatives in the village who use the traditional lineage system, some mechanism of adjustment is necessary. Two relatives who follow different kinship systems may have different conceptions of the proper way of relating to one another. The adjustment is usually made through one of the persons' adopting the other's system for that *particular* relationship. Every acculturated individual in the village who ordinarily uses the generational system will use the Indian lineage system with *some* of his relatives. The converse also occurs, as unacculturated Indians sometimes use the American generational system. Individuals thus adjust to the alternate kinship systems, which tends to minimize the changes in the systems themselves.

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Individual adjustment to alternate ways of structuring relationships is neither alien nor unique to the Mandan-Hidatsa (Firth 1930). Overlapping kinship ties tend to be characteristic of small societies with widely extended kinship systems. In addition to consanguineal and affinal relations, the Mandan-Hidatsa extended kinship to the clan, linked clan, moiety, ceremonial system and the supernatural world. As a result, almost every individual in the village was related to everyone else in more than one way. The closest relationship, as defined by the Mandan-Hidatsa, was usually taken in any given case, but factors unique to the individuals involved were also important (Bowers ms.). Today the people often discuss these dual ways of being related and they tend to regard the white way of reckoning kinship as one more way of being related, comparable to the alternate ways within the Indian system.

The following examples will illustrate how the adjustment takes place.

A young girl teased an unacculturated woman, after which the woman said to her, "You're supposed to be my *icawi* [father's sister] and you are not supposed to tease me, but that's O.K., we can take it the white way."

In referring to an acculturated girl, an older woman remarked, "She don't talk Indian. She is supposed to call me mother but she calls me auntie. I would be glad to hear it if she called me mother but she won't use it anymore. She's my daughter but she won't understand so I call her niece. All of that family acts like white kids."

An old woman of the village called a young converted Indian boy by the term "son." He realized that she could be either a mother or a father's sister to him in the Indian way but he did not know which. He came and asked me to find out from my genealogical charts because, as he said, "I can't figure it out and I want to act right with the old lady."

An acculturated woman refers to her mother's brother as an uncle and addresses him as uncle. He follows the traditional system, continuing to call her younger sister and considering himself as an older brother. Even though the terms are taken from two different systems, neither party seems to be especially disturbed. This is an unusual case and tends to occur only when there is no marked discrepancy in the external behavior.

Frank Bruce, who recently returned to the reservation, was related to William White Duck in two ways—their fathers were in the same clan, which required strong obligatory joking, and Frank was a "father" to William, which called for a father-son respect relationship. William had lived on the reservation all his life, understood both relationships, and quite properly, in terms of the traditional system, took the father-son blood relation rather than the clan tie. He talked politely to Frank and considered him a father, whom one never teased, although he never addressed him as father. Frank did not know that he was related to William either way and on one occasion teased him. William then said in public, "This old man of mine wants to take clans as the rule." Thereafter they teased each other on every possible occasion. All this was explained to Frank after it had taken place, as he had not understood that he had changed an existing relationship.

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Two individuals were related to one another in a dual way: one a joking grandfather-grandchild relationship, and the other a respect father-son relation. These boys were roommates at boarding school, during which time they teased one another and acted more like "roommates" than in accordance with either of the two possible kinship relationships. One said of the Indian way, "We left it home." When they returned to the reservation they continued the teasing relationship which had arisen from the school situation. Eventually they came to use grandfather-grandchild kinship terms as a means of justifying to others their mild joking. In this case, it was fortunate that a kinship bond existed to validate their behavior on the reservation.

Schneider (1953:228) has suggested "that one important function of the use of kinship terms as forms of address is in imposing on the situation a kind of sanction which enforces conformity with the social definition of the relationship." In some situations the people of Lone Hill consciously manipulate kinship terms to serve their personal ends. Interaction between the acculturated and unacculturated is not unstructured or loosely defined, but it does have an element of ambiguity as there are two relatively clear-cut alternate systems. A few individuals take advantage of this in rather subtle ways.

At a political meeting, a converted Indian, who ordinarily uses the generational system, addressed a prominent member of the opposing faction as a "father." He used the Crow system in this situation knowing full well that his political rival would not be so indiscreet as to criticize a "son" in public.

An unacculturated woman of the village came into the house of a wealthy converted Indian and addressed him as "older brother." She sat down and indicated that she had some important business in town but had no means of transportation. The converted Indian, as he was preparing to drive her to town, whispered to me, "The only time she ever calls me 'brother' is when she wants something."

CONCLUSION

In earlier times both the Mandan-Hidatsa and the Southeastern tribes had a pure Crow type lineage system. After acculturative influence an American generational type kinship system is found among the two groups. In the Southeast the orderly and progressive shift in kinship type was characterized as a process of slow modification of the existing system due to adaptive responses to changing conditions. In Lone Hill, the lack of intermediate variations in kinship patterns suggests a rapid process of change caused by early socialization in those families in which there has been white intermarriage.

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The comparison of static types and categories at different times will yield only partial information on the processes of change and persistence. If we are satisfied simply with answers to the question of *what* change has taken place, it may be sufficient to study the beginning and the end of a cultural sequence. But only through examination of an ongoing sequence and of the actual contexts in which a choice of alternatives is made can we say *how* the change has happened and thereby gain insight into the process itself. And the deepest understanding of social change may best be achieved by direct study of the actual mechanisms and processes involved.

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